



## The Extra Mile

Advocating for evidence-based policies and practices to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harms

### Miles to Go: Nebraska Regents Vote to Allow Alcohol on Campus *Personal responsibility: 1, Science: 0*

Last month, the University of Nebraska Board of Regents unanimously agreed to rescind their existing alcohol policy which was established in 1999. The policy change would significantly increase alcohol access and availability by allowing for the expansion of alcohol sales and consumption on campus at facilities controlled by the university. The Regents also voted to approve alcohol sales at an upcoming Big 10 wrestling championship this weekend at the Pinnacle Bank Arena.



These are significant first steps towards allowing the public and students to drink on campus, despite the fact that an estimated 60 percent of undergraduate students are under the legal drinking age of 21. The policy change also opens the door to alcohol advertising at university events and allows the university to sell off the rights to its logos, slogans, and trademarks for their use in alcohol ads.

The move will certainly undo the university's decades-long [effort to reduce its past two-week student binge-drinking](#) rate from 62 percent (1997) to 35 percent (2018) at its Lincoln campus. Through improved collaboration and enforcement of its 1999 policy the university scored a huge victory which has garnered national praise as "a [model for combating alcohol abuse](#)" and the "[fourth-safest campus](#)" among 33 major football schools.

Project Extra Mile expressed multiple concerns to the Board of Regents during the hearing on February 11th that this decision will undeniably lead to increased underage drinking, public intoxication, and impaired driving. The organization noted that it would be impossible to monitor the seating areas and concourses of athletic venues to prevent underage youth and already intoxicated fans from getting alcohol from other fans, leading to more harms on Nebraska's roads due to increased alcohol-impaired driving following the conclusion of these events. Project Extra Mile also pointed out that the university's existing policy protects students from sexual assault and violence. Research by the [National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism \(NIAAA\)](#) estimates the impact of

alcohol-related harm on college students includes over 1,500 deaths each year from unintentional injuries and nearly 700,000 assaults.

The decision appeared to have been made in a vacuum with a complete disregard for the current state of excessive alcohol consumption across Nebraska and in the City of Lincoln. According to the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Nebraska is currently the 4th-worst binge drinking state in the country with the 2nd-worst self-reported DUI rate (NE has nearly 1.9 million episodes of drunk driving each year) and Lincoln is the 3rd-worst binge drinking city in the country.

Despite the scientific evidence presented to the Regents by Project Extra Mile during its testimony on behalf of its 500-plus coalition members as well as emails from the public, they moved immediately to rescind the ban without taking more time to review the public health and safety impacts of their decision.

The Board stated that consistency with alcohol policies across its campuses and enhancing fans' experiences were the most important factors in their decision, but they neglected to acknowledge that all Husker sports enjoy incredible support from fans and the Athletic Department is one of the few programs in the country that is self-sustaining. They also brushed aside the potential harms by emphasizing that '**adults should be treated as adults**' and that alcohol-related problems on other campuses that have allowed alcohol in athletic venues have declined without citing peer-reviewed evidence showing that those policy changes directly impacted those reductions. Instead, legitimate peer-reviewed research says that increasing the availability of alcohol, especially on university campuses, leads to increased underage drinking and the associated harms.

University of Nebraska President Ted Carter committed to the Regents at the hearing that alcohol sales will not take place at Memorial Stadium during the upcoming football season and that he would return to the Board of Regents with any future proposals to sell alcohol at university events and venues. If that proves to be the case, Nebraskans will have more opportunities to help shape university alcohol policies in the future, including any proposed expansion of alcohol sales at Memorial Stadium, but the public must show up en masse and make its collective voice heard. Project Extra Mile will keep the coalition updated on these developments. If you are unsure if you are on the coalition list, please email [info@projectextramile.org](mailto:info@projectextramile.org) to be added.

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## Project Extra Mile Celebrates 25 Years

### *Seventeen honorees to be recognized for going the extra mile*



Project Extra Mile will hold its Recognition Dinner on **Tuesday, May 10th at 6:00 p.m. at Champions Run** in Omaha to celebrate twenty-five years of advocating for proven strategies to prevent alcohol-related harms in the Omaha area and across the state. The event is an opportunity to honor individuals and organizations that have demonstrated a commitment to public health and safety in Nebraska and across the country. Award recipients have gone the extra mile in their efforts to achieve Project Extra Mile's mission

to advocate for evidence-based policies and practices to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harms.

This month we are highlighting several individuals and organizations that will be recognized in May. The remaining honorees will be included in our April newsletter. We hope you can join us on May 10th in Omaha to recognize their extraordinary accomplishments. To learn more and to register, [click here](#).



**John Lemen, Community Advocate Award**

As part of the Florence Neighborhood Citizen's Patrol, John Lemen attended several Omaha City Council meetings over 18 months to speak out against the Reign Lounge and its impact on his community. Throughout the process, John and other citizens spent many late nights documenting problems stemming from the business. He later traveled to Lincoln for a hearing at the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission amid the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure the community's concerns were heard.



**Chief Bryan Waugh, Law Enforcement Officer Award**

Chief Bryan Waugh of the Kearney Police Department has worked closely with Project Extra Mile for over a decade, consistently demonstrating his commitment to enforcing underage drinking laws. While at the La Vista Police Department, he served as a trainer for alcohol compliance checks. More recently, Chief Waugh hosted a statewide training at the Kearney Police Department in 2020, which focused on liquor law enforcement and fake IDs. The Chief is also working to restart underage drinking enforcement operations in Kearney and Buffalo County.



**Omaha Police Department, Law Enforcement Agency Award**

Since 1997, the Omaha Police Department has partnered with Project Extra Mile and other enforcement agencies to coordinate collaborative alcohol compliance checks of area retailers, playing a critical leadership role in increasing retailer compliance with the minimum legal drinking age law from 59% to over 90% today. During the pandemic, OPD was proactive in ensuring that these enforcement operations could safely continue. During the height of the pandemic, OPD checked 521 businesses.



**Jim Timm, Media Award**

The Nebraska Broadcasters Association under Jim's leadership helped launch new public service announcements as part of the *No Free Ride* campaign last summer, which aims to deter adults from providing alcohol to minors. The campaign aired on radio stations across the state. Furthermore, Jim has frequently offered his advice as the organization attempts to improve its outreach to the community via a diverse range of media. Jim is also a valued member of the metro Omaha coalition.

**Ryan Wiesen, Marty Conboy Public Advocate Award**

As one of his duties, Ryan Wiesen, senior attorney for the City of Omaha Law Department, handles liquor licensing issues before the Omaha City Council and the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission. Since taking on this role in 2019, Ryan has handled two high-profile liquor license cases (Reign Ultra Lounge in 2019 and The Good Life in 2021) and has earned praise for his attention to detail and commitment to presenting a strong comprehensive case. He has made it a point to go the extra mile to ensure neighbors are prepared for hearings at the Liquor Control Commission. Ryan has often sought information to better understand the latest research around alcohol-related policies and their effectiveness in preventing community harms.

## Invitation to Participate in a Statewide Effort to Track Cocktails-To-Go, Delivery, and Sales in a Vehicle

*We need your help!*

Project Extra Mile embarked on a data collection project in November 2021. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, lawmakers relaxed alcohol policies and consumers have changed their buying practices. The goal of this project is to better understand business practices regarding cocktails-to-go, curbside pickup (restaurant or grocery orders brought out to the vehicle), and alcohol home delivery (wine clubs, DoorDash/other orders including alcohol).

Laws that were passed to permanently expand access to alcohol have temporary and vague guidelines about how they should be implemented. Unfortunately, our state does not have the resources to enforce those regulations, therefore it is up to us to observe what is happening in our communities. Collecting this data will help identify areas that need stricter regulations and inform law enforcement, the Liquor Control Commission (LCC), and policymakers of any necessary improvements to prevent underage drinking and alcohol-impaired driving. A summary of the results will also be shared in a future newsletter.

The survey can be found [here](#). The questions are straightforward and there are opportunities for you to write more about what you observed. If you have any pictures you take of age verification or your order, please feel free to email them to [info@projectextramile.org](mailto:info@projectextramile.org) as well as any questions you may have. We'd be more than happy to help in any way. If you purchase alcohol using these new services, please fill out the survey and share your experiences. We also want to encourage you to invite friends, family, and co-workers across the state to participate in this effort. It takes all of us to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our communities.

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### Join our Coalition meeting next Wednesday!

Project Extra Mile's next coalition meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, March 9th at 9 a.m.** via Zoom. Our guest speaker will be Carson Benowitz-Fredericks with Alcohol Justice to discuss alcohol advertising and underage drinking. If you watched the Superbowl, think about some of the alcohol commercials you saw and be prepared to discuss them.

The coalition will meet via [Zoom](#). You can join the meeting directly from Project Extra Mile's website page located [here](#). For more information, please get in touch with us at 402-963-9047 or [info@projectextramile.org](mailto:info@projectextramile.org).

